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EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Tel Aviv, Israel

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EXCISE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY JL DATE 2/10/81

PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

January 30, 1979

Dear Charlie,

The absence of any word from you regarding renewed congressional interest in the Black Hebrews following publication of the Jerusalem Post series would indicate that perhaps our fears were exaggerated. Nonetheless, perhaps you will find the enclosed review of Embassy contacts with the Black Hebrew community of some utility. I asked Jim Kerr and Anne Preston to undertake the review as much for your use as for my own in responding to inquiries concerning the activities of this strange societal aberration.

Bernie Rotklein's talk with MK Glass last week confirms our assumption that the GOI is fully cognizant of the public relations implications of the "final resolution" of this problem. Incidentally, I do not entirely share Glass' assessment of the Jerusalem Post series. I believe it offers more even-handed treatment of what is by all accounts an extremely complicated situation than does brother Glass.

Charles M. Hill, Esquire
Deputy Director
NEA/IAI
Department of State
Washington, D. C.

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2

 I have asked Jim Kerr to give him the basic responsibility for liaison with the group henceforth. Meanwhile, we all have our fingers crossed that the situation will continue more or less quiescent.

Yours sincerely,
Wiley
Richard N. Viets
Deputy Chief of Mission

Enclosures:

1. Memorandum dated Jan. 5, 1979
w/attachments.
2. Memorandum dated Jan. 10, 1979
w/attachment.

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE WHEN DETACHED
FROM ENCLOSURES.

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UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

CONF. attached.

TO : DCM : Mr. Richard N. Viets

DATE: January 5, 1979

FROM : CONS: J.E. Kerr *J. E. Kerr*

SUBJECT: Review of Embassy contacts with Black Hebrews, 1977-78

1. At your request, we have reviewed our Black Hebrews files for the years 1977-78 with a view to documenting all contacts with the Black Hebrews during these years.

2. An excellent short historical summary of the arrival and experiences of the Black Hebrew Community in Israel was prepared by John Adams at the end of 1975 and is attached as Annex I for your information. A classified cable (Tel Aviv 7441) on the relation between the Black Hebrews and the GOI, prepared in September 1977, is also available.

3. VISITS

- November 1976 First visit by an Embassy officer to the Black Hebrew Community was made by Consul Kerr and Consular Assistant Weiss. The purpose was to establish a direct personal contact with the leader of the Community (Ben Ami Carter) through whom requests for assistance in locating whereabouts cases could subsequently be directed.
- February 1977 Visit by Conoff Kerr and Conasst Weiss.
- June 1977 Visit by Conoff Kerr and Conasst Weiss.
- November 1977 Visit by Congressman Diggs accompanied Conoff Kerr
- March 1978 Visit by Conoff Kerr and Conasst Weiss.
- April 1978 Visit by Conoff Kerr, Labor Attache Lichtblau and Conasst Weiss
- December 1978 Visit by Conoffs Kerr and Dover

Comment: On all visits to the Black Hebrew Community, consular representatives were most courteously received. Requests to meet with specific individuals have generally been honored, although on occasions the leadership has



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-2-

pleaded ignorance of an individual's English name. (All members of the Community are given and exclusively use Hebrew names).

4. ARRESTS

Our records indicate there were three criminal arrest cases registered during 1977-78; all were for minor infractions, i.e. shop-lifting a bag of dates, shoplifting vegetables and the theft by two minors of a goat. Most arrests reported to the Embassy by the INP have involved immigration violation, i.e. illegal overstays. With very few exceptions, those arrested for an immigration charge have been released the same day.

5. DETENTION AND DEPORTATION AT THE AIRPORT

Our records indicate 12 U.S. citizens were individually denied entry into Israel and deported as suspected members destined to join the Black Hebrew Community.

6. WELFARE AND WHEREABOUTS

Records indicate 22 w/w cases were processed during the 1977-78 period. A brief summary of each case will be presented as soon as possible.

7. (a) CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST

Most of the whereabouts cases have involved Congressional interest. The major Congressional concern demonstrated to date was the November 18, 1977 visit by Congressman Charles Diggs to Dimona and subsequent call on Minister of Interior Burg. During the Congressman's meeting with Minister Burg, the Minister promised to send a special fact-finding commission to investigate conditions at Dimona and recommend means for resolving the long-standing matter of the Black Hebrews' immigration status. Despite Congressman Diggs' assistance and strong Embassy pressure, a commission did not visit Dimona until December 21, 1978. The Commission, headed by M.K. David Glass, appears to favor granting a regularization of status for the present members of the Black Hebrew Community in Israel by supporting the Black Hebrews desire to establish a kibbutz or moshav in the Negev or Arava in exchange for a Black Hebrew commitment to refrain from accepting new members from abroad.

(b) NON-GOVERNMENTAL U.S. INTEREST

On December 21, 1977 Rev. Robert M. Kinlock and a party of 4 representing the Committee for the Elimination of

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Racism, New Council of Churches, visited Israel as guests of the GOI in order to compile a first hand report on the situation of the Black Hebrews' commitment. We are not aware that a final report has ever been prepared.

8. From early 1969 when the first Black Hebrew families led by Charles Blackwell arrived in the country until 1978, there was in effect no coordinated Ministry of Interior policy toward coping with what was generally recognized as an increasingly serious problem. As the Black Hebrew Community increased in members to its present estimated 1400 persons, the MOI periodically engaged in half-hearted deportation campaigns. During the past two years, however, the MOI has shifted its efforts from deportation to a tightening of the screening at ports of entry to prevent any new members joining the Community.

By refusing at the same time to move in any manner to regularize the status of the Black Hebrews in Israel, the MOI may have hoped to so discourage the membership or to force many to voluntarily return to the U.S.

Increased vigilance at ports of entry has been particularly effective in preventing members of the Community in Israel from traveling to the U.S. to recruit new members as return to Israel has become increasingly difficult. It has at the same time created a series of problems with the U.S. in differentiating legitimate Black U.S. tourists from prospective new members of the Black Hebrew sect. Recent events in Guyana may have belatedly jolted the GOI into seeking an accommodation with the Black Hebrew Community which would regularize their status in Israel for cooperation in barring additional recruits from abroad.

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UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : DCM - Mr. Thomas J. Dunnigan

DATE: January 12, 1976

FROM : CG - Ralph H. Cadeaux

SUBJECT: Black Hebrews

I asked John Adams to prepare a background summary on the Black Hebrews in preparation for our talk with Minister Burg and Mrs. Judith Huebner. In addition to the information contained in John's attached memo, I should point out that one of the matters we will be discussing with Dr. Burg and Mrs. Huebner is the question of who will assume responsibility for the 60 or so Americans who have renounced their American citizenship. I have proposed a compromise solution, i.e., that the Israelis accept responsibility for the expatriated Americans and the Embassy would continue to do what it could for those Black Hebrews who request Embassy assistance.

If there are any questions about these memos, please do not hesitate to ask me about them.

Enclosure:

Memo re Black Hebrews

CG:RHCadeaux:jep



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UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : DCM - Mr. Thomas J. Dunnigan
THRU: CG - Ralph H. Cadeaux *RHC*
FROM : CONS - John H. Adams *JH*

DATE: December 22, 1975

SUBJECT: American Citizens Who Claim to be Black Hebrews

The first group of 8 adults and 12 children arrived in early 1969 from Chicago via Liberia where they had been living for more than a year in communes. They settled in Arad and were generally accepted.

The second group of eight families arrived in December, 1969 and created quite a sensation. They spoke some Hebrew, declared themselves to be Jews who were descended from a group of approximately 140 Black Jews who were exiled from Israel to Africa in approximately 700 B.C. Absorption authorities granted them rights as immigrants but stipulated that their claim to be Jews had to be verified. They received a warm welcome in the development town of Dimona where they were settled.

Trouble started with the arrival of the third group from Liberia. Permission was not sought in advance, and they were refused immigrants' rights. Eight families already established in Dimona took them in. More arrived and crowded into the few flats that had been set aside for the first groups. Problems developed with overcrowding, robbery of a filling station in the area, refusal to pay for food in the markets, raucous living and general friction with the other residents of the area. Problems came to a head with the hatchet murder of one of the group in January, 1972. Five others were charged and convicted of manslaughter and conspiracy. All have now been released and deported to the United States.

A decision was made in 1971 that subsequent groups be denied entry into the country as non bona fide visitors. GOI then started an effort to deport those who remain (approximately 300, including children) for illegal presence, i.e., overstaying tourist visas. Only 5 or 6 have temporary residence visas which were granted to the first group in 1969. A serious deportation effort was initiated in 1973, but before 20-30 had been expelled, a large number (approximately 60-70) appeared at this Embassy and renounced their U.S. citizenship, which effectively precluded further deportation, i.e., to what country and with what travel document. GOI then backed off and matter has been relatively quiet for past two years.



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-2-

During the past year approximately 8-10 women--usually unmarried but with several children--have come to the Embassy claiming to be fed up with the entire movement and have requested assistance to return to the U.S. As very few have family or friends who are able to provide such assistance, a majority of them have been repatriated at USG expense.

During a major deportation drive in 1973, Mrs. Huebner of the Ministry of the Interior verbally assured the Embassy that the GOI would fund the return of any Black Hebrews who voluntarily sought such assistance from the Embassy. Several, in fact, went back in this way. Recently, however, she has contended that they no longer have the funds to do this and will pay for only those who are on a "list" of illegals in the country. As virtually the entire community (still numbering approximately 300 people) is illegal, her distinction is less than clear. The number has not appreciably diminished as new members have managed to enter the country, primarily because of the apparent reluctance of the Israeli authorities to intensively question all Black Americans upon their arrival in the country.

The situation is presently quiet for the Embassy, and the GOI appears to be more relaxed. A recent non-critical documentary on "The Black Hebrews of Dimona" was shown on Israeli TV during prime time--possibly to demonstrate that, indeed, the Zionist State is not racist and tolerates even this bizarre group in its midst.

CONS:JHAdams:jep

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INDICATE
COLLECT
CHARGE TO

	FROM AmEmbassy TEL AVIV	CLASSIFICATION CONFIDENTIAL
E.O. 11652: TAGS: SUBJECT:	GDS CASC, CVIS, PAS, IS ISRAELITE OR "BLACK HEBREWS" SEEK SHOWDOWN WITH GOI	
ACTION:	SECSTATE WASHDC	
INFO:	AmEmbassy AMMAN AmConsul JERUSALEM CONFIDENTIAL TEL AVIV 7441	
LAE AMB DCI EXX CONS-2 POL-3 CHRON	REF: A. Tel Aviv 7196 B. Tel Aviv 5140 C. Tel Aviv A-9	
7	1. The Israelite or Black Hebrew Sect is currently living in three communities in Israel (the largest is in Dimona where about 550 live) consisting of about 1100 members. The group appears appears to be suffering from an increasing number of health, economic, housing and morale problems which have resulted in several recent defections. The Sect leaders have indicated to Embassy officers their mounting frustration over the refusal of the GOI to regularize the group's status and accord its members housing and jobs on the same basis as Jewish immigrants. The arrest and subsequent deportation	

DRAFTED BY: LAB:GLichtblau:sm	DRAFTING DATE 9/30/77	TEL. EXT. 264	CONTENTS AND CLASSIFICATION APPROVED BY DCM:RViets
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CLEARANCES:
POL:JECrump
CONS:APreston

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Form 7, 5-74

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3. As a result of the interception and deportation of this latest group of Sect members, the group's leader, Gabriel Hagadol, has been jailed and faces deportation on charges of having no identification and ~~being~~^{being} an illegal alien. [REDACTED]

Classification

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[REDACTED]

Local Israeli community leaders have denied that there is racial discrimination and claim that efforts have been made to have Sect members join~~XX~~ in local social and cultural activities, but that the group's separation from the rest of the community is self-imposed. There is as yet no indication how the GOI will handle the situation. A more detailed report follows by air-gram.

LEWIS

[Handwritten signature]